

226
114
[174]
[227]
aboriginal, is the forest creeper the Timbira call ha'kró, the Neobrazilians timbó. The Indians tear it out with the roots, then wash off the earth, and tap the root on a log with an appropriate stick so as to separate the fibers. While some rinse the fiber balls in the water of the creek, others wait downstream in order to seize with their hands the stupefied fish as they drift along, or spit them on arrows, or catch the smaller fry with a scoop net, kri, this last being a conical net mounted on a hoop without a handle. My reason for regarding it as aboriginal is that, while lacking among both the Guajajara and Neobrazilians, it appears in the same form with the identical designation among the Eastern (Ramkô'kamekra, Pukóbye, Kre'pu'm-kateye) and Western Timbira. The small fish are collected in gourd bowls or little baskets, the larger ones are ranged on special cords, tepêça, with a wooden tip at one end and a transverse stick at the other (fig. 6).

226
791
In drugging fish, too, they like to select a young tamhã'k, who is the first to enter the water when the stupefied fish begin to appear, while the other Indians wait on

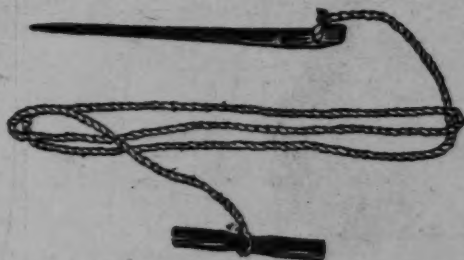


Fig. 6. Cord for stringing fish. Approx. 1/4 nat. size.

the bank. He spits the first three fish on his arrow, signalling for each by a shout, to which the others respond by screaming and the blowing of trumpets. Then he leaves the water and hands the fish to an old man, while everyone starts gathering the spoils.

GATHERING

222
178
782
Gathering is indissolubly linked with nomadic or seminomadic life. Farmers in a restricted territory, like the present Timbira, cannot gather in the steppe with any measure of profit.

However, though this source of food has shrunk almost to the insignificance of fishing through the progress of agriculture and the restriction of the habitat, the Ramkô'kamekra still pray to the sun to protect the steppe fruits and let them grow to gladden men's hearts. This is done somewhat differently than in the corresponding prayer for game, though in almost identical words. The speaker was the oldest man of the entire tribe. He went to the plaza in the morning, rested one knee on the ground, stretched out an empty gourd bowl toward the sun, and said, "Kêdeti imã ampó ôo yamã ke imã lokati vayakri'."

222
175
137
Before rice and manioc flour were available, when the tribal territory was about twenty times its present extent, the gathering of steppe and *galeria* fruits was perhaps proportionately greater. Ribeiro,¹⁰⁰ who evidently observed the Timbira with special frequency during their migratory period, enumerates the following among their wild fruits:

¹⁰⁰ Memoria, § 11.

Nimaendajá: The Eastern Timbira

73

Juçára (<i>Euterpe</i> sp.)	Piquy (<i>Caryocar</i> sp.)
Bacaba (<i>Oenocarpus</i> sp.)	Mocajuba (<i>Acrocomia</i> sp.)
Sapucaia (<i>Leocthis</i> sp.)	Mangaba (<i>Hancornia</i> sp.)
Cariti (?)	Cajá (<i>Anacardium</i> sp.)
Guahiroba	Araçá (<i>Psidium</i> sp.)
Bacury (<i>Platonia</i> sp.)	Cóco-babassu (<i>Orbignia</i> sp.)
Peçá	

Strangely enough, he omits the palm that is one of the most, if not the most, important of species for the Timbira, namely, the burity (*Mauritia flexuosa*).

Snethlage thus supplements the list:²²

Piassava (<i>Attalea</i> sp.)	Paty (<i>Astrocaryum</i> sp.)
Catulé (<i>Coccoloba</i> sp.)	Muricy (<i>Brytonima</i> sp.)
(Various <i>Astrocaryes</i>)	

Of all the species named only four are really important in supplying a sufficiency of food during part of the year, viz., the four palms of the *galeria* woods—juçára, bacaba, babassu, and burity.

From the fleshy layer of the seeds of the juçára, bacaba, and burity fruits the Indians prepare more or less viscid beverages, which are very nutritious by reason of their fatty content. They are strained through little round strainers, plaited from uarumã strips, whose ends are twisted together into a peripheral pad (pl. 20, c). The babassu yields for food not only its strongly oleaginous seeds, but also the indwelling larvae of *Bruchus nucleorum*,²³ which we have noted as used for hair pomade. The seeds are pounded in a mortar, and the pulp is rinsed with water, whence there evolves a fatty, white juice, which is poured through the above-mentioned strainer.

Anciently tribes waged war over stands of babassu, as in the fighting between the Krahô' and the Pôrekamekra noted by Pohl.²⁴ It was obviously this palm whose ownership was at stake; for it is especially common on the left bank of the Tocantina.

Ribeiro mentions the mocajuba trunk as a source of food and drink, a use I have never myself noted. On the other hand, the palmitos, leaf shoots, of the juçára and especially of the anajá (*Maximiliana regia*) are occasionally consumed even today.

In times of dearth the Ramkô'kamekra prepare a kind of flour from the root of the patioba (*Caladium* sp.; Timbira: mriti), which grows in the water of creeks and swamps.

As an article of diet, wild honey is equally insignificant. Snethlage describes the procedure of hacking it out of the trees and pouring it into gourd bottles. I have never seen beehives in Timbira villages.

Except for honey, the gathering of wild food is principally a feminine task; even nowadays women and girls are rather addicted to it. Marching through the steppe, they glance all around, almost instinctively scouring the country, and collect whatever comes near them into a gourd bowl, which they generally take along on such trips. Sometimes a large bevy of girls, especially young ones, jointly roam over the steppe for days in quest of fruits. In order not to miss their customary dances every night, they take a preceptor with them, but otherwise decline a male escort and would manhandle any lad who should thrust his company upon them. During one of these marches, in 1933, I observed the following remarkable terminal performance.

During the last period of seclusion of the initiation festival held at the time a dozen girls with the preceptor Kaukré and his wife marched about forty kilometers

²² Nordostbras. Ind., 160.

²³ Cf. Frôes Abreu, Terra das Palmeiras, 54.

²⁴ Pohl, 2:137.